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Osmair Camargo Candido, 60, known as Fininho, teaches future necropsy professionals at a school in Sao Paulo.



Osmair Camargo Candido, works as a gravedigger at a cemetery in Sao Paulo, Brazil.

## Gravedigger and philosopher: The double life of Osmair Candido

For Osmair Candido, who has worked as a gravedigger for the past 30 years, the pandemic was worse than a nightmare, an ordeal the Brazilian overcame only with the help of a few old friends-Kierkegaard, Kant and Nietzsche. The soft-spoken 60-something-whose occupation necessitates spending most of the day in a small cemetery in Sao Paulo is not just a laborer but also a man of letters, a philosopher. During the pandemic he says he sometimes cried, overwhelmed by the rampant death, but adds that philosophy kept him from fainting with distress and fatigue like his colleagues near the graves he was digging.

"Before we only had one burial a week," but at the worst of the pandemic "it was up to 18 a day," he tells AFP, comparing the scene to something from Dante. With the help of the philosophers Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Kant, Hegel and Diderot, he was able to "accept death." But above all it was the works of Nietzsche and the ancient Greeks that helped him "a lot in the most difficult moments." When Candido left his house each morning, he did not know whether he would return from the Penha Cemetery "alive or dead, contaminated or not." Each evening he took "one, two, three

or four showers."

Six months ago, "the hearses were arriving back-to-back and there were 100 to 200 coffins piled up waiting to be buried." "Nobody wanted to touch them, to take the risk," says Candido, who adds that he never caught Covid-19. The worst was the burial of a teenager: "From behind a wall, I heard a woman scream. The scream came before her son's body." She then clutched his coffin, preventing his burial.

### Master of philosophy

Candido has buried more than 3,000 people in his three-decade gravedigging career. "During all of these years, I have seen very few people prepared for death. Death requires a lot of respect, attention and silence," he says. Wandering among the graves in the wooded cemetery, Candido recounts how he came to philosophy. Birdsong fills the air. Faded, plaster Virgin Mary statues, archangels, and weathered yellow photos of loved ones serve as the backdrop. Cats, signatures of cemetery, abound.

It all began, he says, when he took German classes at Uniban university in Sao Paulo, after being a boxer and win-



Osmair Camargo Candido, 60, known as Fininho, works as a gravedigger at a cemetery in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP photos

dow washer. He stopped his studies, however, to become a gravedigger. Today he earns about 3,000 reais (\$540) a month. "I loved literature, but I couldn't buy books," he recalls. "So they gave me some. And then I decided to study philosophy. I really liked it."

Thanks to a scholarship he was finally able to graduate with a master's degree from Mackenzie Presbyterian University in

Sao Paulo, during which time he communicated via email with French philosopher Jean Baudrillard. If he is now able to stare death in the face, it is only because he is already living a second life-Candido is now also a philosophy teacher. In the evening, wearing a white lab coat emblazoned with the National Association of Necropsy emblem, Candido teaches ethics to young autopsy technicians.

They take notes as the slender Black man, who has white hair and rimmed glasses, quotes from Aristotle and the likes. Candido, who usually gets up at 3:00 am, is also currently finishing a three-volume book on philosophical thoughts, two of which are devoted to the pandemic. Several publishing houses have said they want to publish it.

### Adoration for Kant

"Philosophy has made me grow up, get out of myself, understand and consider others and other ideas. It was a big step," Candido says. While he "adores" Emmanuel Kant, the gravedigger had a bit of trouble with his "Critique of Pure Reason." "I read it up to 100 times, until I understood it! In Portuguese, but some parts in German," he says. Candido believes that it was thanks to the philosophers that he did not have to go to "psychiatric hospitals for treatment" as his fellow cemetery workers did. "I studied philosophy, loved philosophy and so I will die," he says with a smile. — AFP



Tunisian photographer Jacques Perez (wheelchair) attends the launch of his exhibition 'Memories before Oblivion' at Khreiddine (Hayreddin) Palace in the Medina of Tunisia's capital Tunis. — AFP photos



People view the photographs of Tunisian photographer Jacques Perez.



A visitor views the photographs of Tunisian photographer Jacques Perez.



People view the photographs of Tunisian photographer Jacques Perez.

## Jameela Jamil feels 'sick of the Internet'

The 35-year-old actress has hit back at her online critics after she received a producing credit on boyfriend James Blake's latest album, 'Friends That Break Your Heart'. Jameela - who previously hosted the BBC Radio 1 Chart Show - tweeted: "A lot of mostly women insisting I couldn't possibly have actually worked on my boyfriend's music, and that he must have just credited me to be nice... I was a DJ for 8 years, and studied music for 6 years before that. You are part of the problem of why women don't pursue producing (sic)" Jameela subsequently urged women within the music industry to support each other. She said: "Didn't expect this conversation to blow up the way it did, or to see so much support. Saddened to see how many women in music have faced so much gaslighting over their skill and input and sending you love. We have to AT LEAST do better for each other because these are BLEAK TIMES (sic)" Jameela also took to Instagram to address the issue, revealing James "had to fight me to take credit on this album because I was so preemptively sick of the internet. Especially after this same thing happened on his last record that I worked for countless hours on." The TV star added: "In the end I took the credit I deserved because of how important it is for women who work on music to visibly exist in the space of music production, and because I would want any of you who follow me to take ownership of what is rightfully your achievements. I hope you're taking credit for your work wherever you are in the world right now. I hope you know that if you're not being believed over your achievements... that it's not a reflection of you... it's a reflection of people who are so underachieving, cowardly and insecure that they can't fathom that you could be impressive. And it happens at every level in every industry. Even to me. Even when I don't credit myself, my boyfriend just quietly credited me. (sic)"



## It's all in the eye: Tunisia's veteran photographer Jacques Perez

"It's the eye that makes a photograph, not the camera," says 90-year-old Jacques Perez, who has forever retained his curiosity for his homeland Tunisia. An exhibition of his work named "Souvenirs d'Avant l'Oubli" (Memories before Oblivion) is being held until the end of October in a palace in the medina of Tunis, the old city where he was born and still lives. "I didn't study to take photos-no need. It's above all about seeing. I like to look at 360 degrees and show what I saw," he said. "This was not a vocation, it came on its own." Perez said he began photography at the age of 11 or 12: "I was lucky to have a German mother and an Italian grandmother who gave me illustrated

magazines" and educated his eyes.

After 15 years of amateur photography alongside a teaching job, he was commissioned by a major Tunisian publisher to create a photo book of Sidi Bouzid, a poor but picturesque blue-and-white city, that launched his career. In the exhibition, all his works are "inhabited" by people, Perez said. "People speak to me, their faces intrigue me, I would like to know what's behind them." This idea is at the core of the work of Perez, a photographer of international repute, from the United States to France. He "is a humanist photographer," like those who inspired him, including Robert Doisneau, Henri Cartier-Bresson and Elliot Erwitt, said exhibition curator Hamideddine Bouali.

### 'It's all intuitive'

Perez has only ever wanted to photograph his own country, in all its diversity. "I feel concerned only by Tunisia," he said. The 70 photos in the exhibition cover the breadth of his work: the sea and fishermen, the daily life of Tunisians, the old arts and crafts. Some of the most striking images are portraits of women, including "Lady of Chebika" and "Lady with a Lion". Both were spontaneous portraits by Perez, who likes to interact with his subjects and has shunned "stolen" images or those shot from far away with telephoto lenses.

In the Lady of Chebika, wrinkled with age, "her face interested me but I did not know if I could approach her," Perez said.

"I got closer, she did not react. I got closer again and she gave me a sign of assent. I took the picture." "It's all intuitive," he said, stressing that "photographers have this ability to predict the next move". He himself is surprised that he was able to capture the moment when a drop fell from the jar of a water carrier. It's all about "patience", he said, knowing how to "wait for the right moment without provoking it". But he remains humble, stating that "I do not take myself seriously. I am neither the father, nor the cousin, nor the grandfather of the Tunisian photo. I am just a photographer in Tunisia." — AFP